The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers / L'Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes

CASLT/ACPLS

Not Cool For Boys to Learn French as a Second Language

Ottawa, Ontario, February 28, 2005 – A recent study of secondary school Core French students, uncovers that social perceptions of masculinity are influencing some boys to be less motivated to learn French.

"The males in this study perceived themselves to be less capable in the French as Second Language (FSL) classroom, and to have less internal control over their successes and failures in French when compared to their female peers," writes Scott Kissau, a French immersion teacher who has recently completed his PhD in Philosophy of Education at the University of Windsor.

Dr. Kissau points to a number of factors that can affect boys' motivations to learn French—including traditional views of male and female societal roles—as significant influences on the results of the study.

The study revealed that many boys hold the following perceptions: it's not 'normal' for them to do well in French; French culture is more of a female interest; and boys are less capable of doing well in French. Peers described boys who liked French, as being less masculine. Societal perceptions are noted as major influences on the boys in this study.

Kissau, together with the Canadian Association for Second Language Teachers, would like to see a greater effort made to incorporate male interests in the FSL classroom, through exposure to more French speaking male role models.

According to Kissau, "The greatest challenge for educators and parents is to appeal to boys by linking male interests with FSL experiences without perpetuating a narrow, stereotypical definition of masculinity."

"All students would benefit from encountering a diverse group of French speaking males through field trips, guest speakers, music groups, athletes and more male, French teachers," states Carolyn King, CASLT President.

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